



# CATAWBA COUNTY

3070 11<sup>TH</sup> Ave. Drive S.E. • Hickory, North Carolina 28602 • (828) 695-5800  
TDD (828) 695-5155 • FAX (828) 695-4410  
Public Health Department

Barry A. Blick, MPH, Health Director  
Debbie Easton, RN, Immunization Clinic Charge Nurse  
Tracey D. Paul, BSPH, Health Education Coordinator

Ph: 695-5861

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## Catawba County Health Officials Urge The Public To Get Flu Shots This Year

Local Public Health Officials are urging Catawba County citizens to get immunized against influenza this season, especially elderly people, health care workers and those with chronic conditions. Catawba County statistics indicate rates higher than the state for deaths from flu and pneumonia. In fact, Catawba County's pneumonia/flu deaths per 100,000 far exceed North Carolina's deaths per 100,000 for adults 65-84 years of age, over the age of 85, and for the total population in general (see chart below – source: 1999-2001 State Center for Health Statistics). Catawba County's pneumonia/flu deaths per 100,000 people for the 85 years of age and older bracket are over 50% higher than North Carolina's deaths rates for that same age cohort.

Pneumonia/Flu Deaths	North Carolina	Catawba County
65-84 Years of Age	90.5	131.8
Over the Age of 85	770.0	1182.2
Total Population	23.1	33.0

Low immunization rates can lead to unnecessary deaths, but the Catawba County Public Health Department has plenty of flu vaccine available for anyone who wants or needs a flu shot this year. The flu shots are available at the Health Department's Immunization Clinic, Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm, walk-ins only, no appointment necessary. **Catawba County Public Health Department staff is even willing to visit your church or community group to provide flu shots upon request!** Please call 695-5861 to take advantage of this opportunity. The cost is \$20.00 for a flu shot and \$28 for a pneumonia shot (for the general public). Medicaid and Medicare Part B insurance cover flu shot costs, so **please remember to bring your insurance card with you!**

Two of the most common illnesses that affect older adults are influenza and pneumonia. Influenza, which is more commonly referred to as the flu, is a very contagious viral infection that specifically targets the nose, throat, and lungs. It is one of the most severe illnesses of the winter season, and complications that arise from influenza cause 36,000 deaths and 114,000 hospitalizations each year in the United States. Pneumonia is a bacterial infection that initially invades the lungs; however, it can infect the bloodstream and the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord if left untreated. The infection kills thousands of people in the United States each year, with most of these deaths occurring in people 65 years of age and older or children under two years of age. Contrary to popular belief, neither the pneumonia nor the influenza vaccine will actually cause the disease in those who choose to be vaccinated.

## Statistical Data:

- Together, influenza and pneumonia are the 7<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the United States, and the 5<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death among persons 65 years of age or older
- The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases and National Coalition for Adult Immunization reported that for the 2000-2001 flu season, only 29 percent of high-risk adults ages 18-64 were vaccinated – substantially lower than Healthy People 2010 coverage goals of 60 percent
- CDC (Centers for Disease Control) recommends that individuals at any age who have chronic conditions as well as those 50 years of age and older get vaccinated
- CDC reports that flu vaccinations have been proven highly effective, reducing hospitalization by 70 percent and death by 85 percent for those ages 65 and older
- CDC figures show immunization rates among Hispanics and blacks continue to lag behind whites – 52 percent of black and 46 percent of Hispanic adults ages 65 and older regularly receive flu vaccinations, compared to 70 percent of whites
- Flu is the single leading cause of death for any vaccine-preventable disease, with the majority of deaths among the elderly, according to the National Coalition for Adult Immunization
- Flu vaccinations are related to fewer hospitalizations associated with heart disease, stroke and pneumonia
- Vaccinating young children ages 6 months old to 23 months old against the flu is also highly recommended because they are at risk of hospitalization from flu complications and all children over 6 months of age who have high-risk factors such as asthma, cardiovascular disease or diabetes should be vaccinated to avoid flu-related complications
- Pneumonia results in 12,500 deaths each year in the United States, and approximately 50% of these deaths could have been prevented through the use of the pneumonia vaccine
- Research shows that only 55% of adults 65 years of age or older, and 8 – 10% of adults in high-risk groups who should receive the pneumonia vaccine have actually received it
- Each year the bacteria that is responsible for the pneumonia virus accounts for an estimated 500,000 cases of pneumonia, 60,000 bloodstream infections, and 2,800 cases on meningitis or inflammation of the tissues and fluids surrounding the brain and spinal cord